Fleishhacker Pool
Corner of Sloat Boulevard and
Great Highway
San Francisco
San Francisco County
California

HABS No. CA-2075

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Washington, D.C. 20243

NATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING RECORD
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ARCHITECTURAL DATA FORM

HABS, CAL, 38-SANFRA, 136

STATE	COUNTY	TOWN OR VICINITY
CALIFORNIA	SAN FRANCISCO (75)	SAN FRANCISCO

HISTORIC NAME OF STRUCTURE (INCLUDE SOURCE FOR NAME)
FLEISHHACKER POOL (and Bath House)

HABS NO.
CA-2075

SECONDARY OR COMMON NAMES OF STRUCTURE

COMPLETE ADDRESS (DESCRIBE LOCATION FOR RURAL SITES)
Corner of Sloat Boulevard and the Great Highway

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE SOURCE)
1924-1925

ARCHITECT(S) (INCLUDE SOURCE)
Earl Clements (for pool)
Ward & Blohme (for bath house)

SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL, INCLUDE ORIGINAL USE OF STRUCTURE)
Fleishhacker pool was, at the time it was built, the largest swimming pool in the world It contained a uniquely designed circulation and heating system that kept 6,000,000 gallons of salt water heated, and which utilized the tides of the ocean to fill the pool.

STYLE (IF APPROPRIATE)

MATERIAL OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS) The pool is constructed of reinforced concrete with concrete steps along the entire shallow end of the pool. See attached report.

SHAPE AND DIMENSIONS OF STRUCTURE (SKETCHED FLOOR PLANS ON SEPARATE PAGES ARE ACCEPTABL
Rectangular with bulge on the east side. It is 1,000 feet long, 150 feet wide at mid section. It ranges in depth from three feet to fourteen feet.

EXTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE

See attached report.

INTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE (DESCRIBE FLOOR PLANS, IF NOT SKETCHED)

See attached report.

MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS WITH DATES

Minor alterations, see attached report.

PRESENT CONDITION AND USE
Pool not in use, deteriorating, to be demolished.

OTHER INFORMATION AS APPROPRIATE This site was recorded by the Environmental Protection Agency (funding the construction of the San Francisco Westside Transport project), in compliance with Executive Order 11593 and a Memorandum of Agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION (INCLUDE LISTING ON NATIONAL REGISTER, STATE REGISTERS, ETC.)

See attached report bibliography.

COMPILER, AFFILIATION	DATE
Charles Hall Page & Associates, Inc. for the San Francisco Zoological Society. Patricia L. Rowse, Historian, HABS.	July 1980

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY HABS No. CA-2075

FLEISHHACKER POOL

DESCRIPTION OF POOL

Location: Fleishhacker Pool is located in the southwestern part of San Francisco at the corner of Sloat Boulevard and the Great Highway, and across the Great Highway from the Pacific Ocean. The pool property is adjacent to the Fleishhacker Zoo.

Site: The pool was constructed in a treeless, sandy area next to the Pacific Ocean. Cypress and spruce trees were planted around the pool at the time of its construction as a windbreak and have since grown into a mature stand of trees which completely encircles the pool. The pool is oriented north-south on its long axis. There are four service buildings around the pool. The bath house is on the west, there are concession stands near both the north and south ends, and there is a boiler house northeast of the pool. Pedestrian underpasses lead out of the pool area under Sloat Boulevard and the Great Highway at the north and south ends repectively. The pool is encircled by a promenade which orignally was lined with evergreen trees and regularly spaced street lamps of a classical design. Both trees and lamps are no longer standing. Wooden park benches which encircle the pool are mostly in poor condition.

Description: The pool is essentially rectangular in shape with a wider central section formed by a bulge on the east side. The pool is 1000 feet long, 150 feet wide at its mid section, and approximately 100 feet wide elsewhere. It ranges in depth from three feet at the south end to fourteen feet at the north end. The pool itself is constructed of reinforced concrete and will hold 6,000,000 gallons of water. There are concrete steps along the entire shallow south end of the pool. Pool ladders and lifeguard stands of ordinary pipe metal construction are placed at intervals along the sides of the pool. At the north end is a steel frame five- and ten-meter diving platform built about 1940 which replaced an elaborate wood frame structure with classical balustrades and decorative brackets under each of two platforms.

DESCRIPTION OF BUILDING

The Bath House (Exterior)

Description: The major pool building is the bath house, a large Mediterranean Style structure with light stucco walls and green tiled hip roofs. The building is constructed of reinforced concrete and wood posts and beams. It is located centrally along the western side of the pool.

Elevations: In elevation, the principal east face of the bath house facing the pool consists of a two-story central block with long one-story wings on either side. Classically derived decorative detail is concentrated in the central block while the indentical wings are very sparsely ornamented.

The central block is a two-story structure with a low green tiled hip roof and a central slab chimney. The facade consists of a ground floor with deep set vertically proportioned windows and a central three-part entrance, and a second floor of large, nearly square windows. The openings in each floor are paired vertically and grouped in three units of three vertical pairs between slightly projecting ends. The ground floor consists of an Ionic Order of pilasters with a superstructure of Doric pilasters in the second story. The floors are divided by the entablature of the order, and the ends of the facade are framed in pairs of pilasters. The three-part entrance consists of three high openings with bracketed lintels. Each lintel is surmounted by a pair of dolphins on either side of a shell-cartouche and underscored by a wave molding. The central entrance portal has been enclosed with a ticket booth and the central cartouche is hidden by a metal clock.

The identical one-story wings are linked visually to the central block by arches. Each wing consists of a long plain facade with tile coping and is pierced by small narrow windows. Each wing is entered by two simply cut, symmetrically placed, arched entrances with walled steps in front of each entrance.

The long narrow rear wing of the central section, with its angled ends, which fronts on the Great Highway, rests on a higher part of the sloping site. It contains a high basement at the level of the ground floor of the central block pierced by undecorated, vertically proportioned windows and a central door, and a top story of very large, almost square, industrial sash windows. These windows are separated by thin polygonal posts with simple capitals. The wall is crowned by a simple frieze under the green tiled hip roof. The main central block and this rear wing are joined by oblique walls.

The Bath House (Interior)

Floor plan: The bath house is a smaller mirror image of the pool, essentially rectagular in shape, with a wider central section breaking out of the rectangle to the west. The central section is itself composed of two rectangular parts, a large rectangular block facing the pool and a narrower and slightly taller section behind fronting on the Great Highway and constituting the major portion of the western protrusion of the building. This section is long and narrow with polygonal ends.

Ground Floor: From the pool's esplanade, visitors saw what appeared to be three elaborate entrances. However, the central door was the front of a three-sided ticket booth and the two flanking entrances led to the women's waiting room on the south and men's waiting room on the north. These waiting rooms were identical in size with wood-beamed ceilings, red tiled floors, three (4' x 7') windows looking out onto the pool and turnstiles in front of the entries to the

north and south wings. Along the west wall of each room, behind five glass windows (4' x 5'), staff collected valuables and gave out towels and suits. Shelves for storage were located behind this area.

A small office stood behing the ticket booth and two entrances that led to either the men's or women's suit rooms. These suit rooms contained laundry chutes, additional storage space and dumbwaiters. Stairs in the southwest corner of the women's suit room led to the basement laundry room.

The west half of the ground floor consisted of a large boy's locker room. Reached by a north exit from the men's waiting room, the boy's locker room had cement floors and wood-beamed ceilings. It contained two rows, separated by an eight-foot aisle, of 14 columns of lockers; two skywells (20' x 24') for light; and green tiled showers in the northwest and southwest corners.

Basement: The stairs from the women's suit room led to the wood-beamed, cemented floored laundry room. Three washers and an extractor were centrally located adjacent to the eastern wall. In addition, there were two laundry chutes, two dumbwaiters, and a workbench along the west wall.

A small workbench area and an exit door were situated at the southwest corner of the laundry room.

In the northwest corner, a sliding fire door led into the boiler room (24' x 18'). This room contained a large boiler (10' x 6') in the center, a heater in the northwest corner, and sump in the southwest corner.

Second Floor: Patrons entered small lobbies from the north and south terraces. Steps led from these areas to a cafeteria which faced the pool, and to the upper dining room which was located in the narrow rear wing of the central section, at a higher elevation and faced the ocean. Both rooms featured tile flooring, wood-beamed ceiling, and moldings around the windows, doors and walls.

The cafeteria consisted of a 30-foot counter along the western wall. The counter opened up into the lower kitchen. Two pipe-rails paralleled the counter up to the cashier's table in the center. Natural lighting came from nine nearly square windows (8' x 6') with a pool view.

The east wall of the upper dining room contained a seven-foot soda fountain in the center which separated two seven-foot counters that opened up into the upper kitchen. Adjacent to this area, patrons sat at stools around a long and narrow 30-foot table. The west and the angled north and south walls consisted of nine large windows (8' x 10') which brought an unobstructed view of Ocean Beach.

The central area of the second floor was divided into east and west kitchens, two skywells, two public restrooms and a dishwashing room. The dishwashing room was to the north of the smaller (eastern) lower kitchen and public restrooms were located on either side of the area. The lower kitchen's west wall contained a large stove (33' x 4') in the center, and entrances to the upper kitchen at the north and south corners.

Lighted by three skylights (16' x 14'), the upper kitchen contained two large refrigerators (each 8' x 6') and tables for food preparation. Skywalls (20' x 24') were located behind its north and south walls. Exits included a door to the upper dining room and a staircase in the southwest corner which led to the kitchen storage room at the mezzanine landing, and the boy's locker room on the ground floor.

North and South Wings: The north and south wings were of identical size (156' x 48') with cement floors, green tiled restrooms and showers, wood-beamed ceilings, two exits to the esplanade, twenty-two skylights (6' x 9') and 11 small heavy opaque flassed windows (3' x 7') along the eastern wall.

The south, women's dressing room consisted of: Two rows, spaced eight feet apart, of 10 columns of lockers; a restroom, exit and showers in the southeast corner; a restroom in the northwest corner; and a restroom, first aid station, exit and room for female workers in the northeast corner.

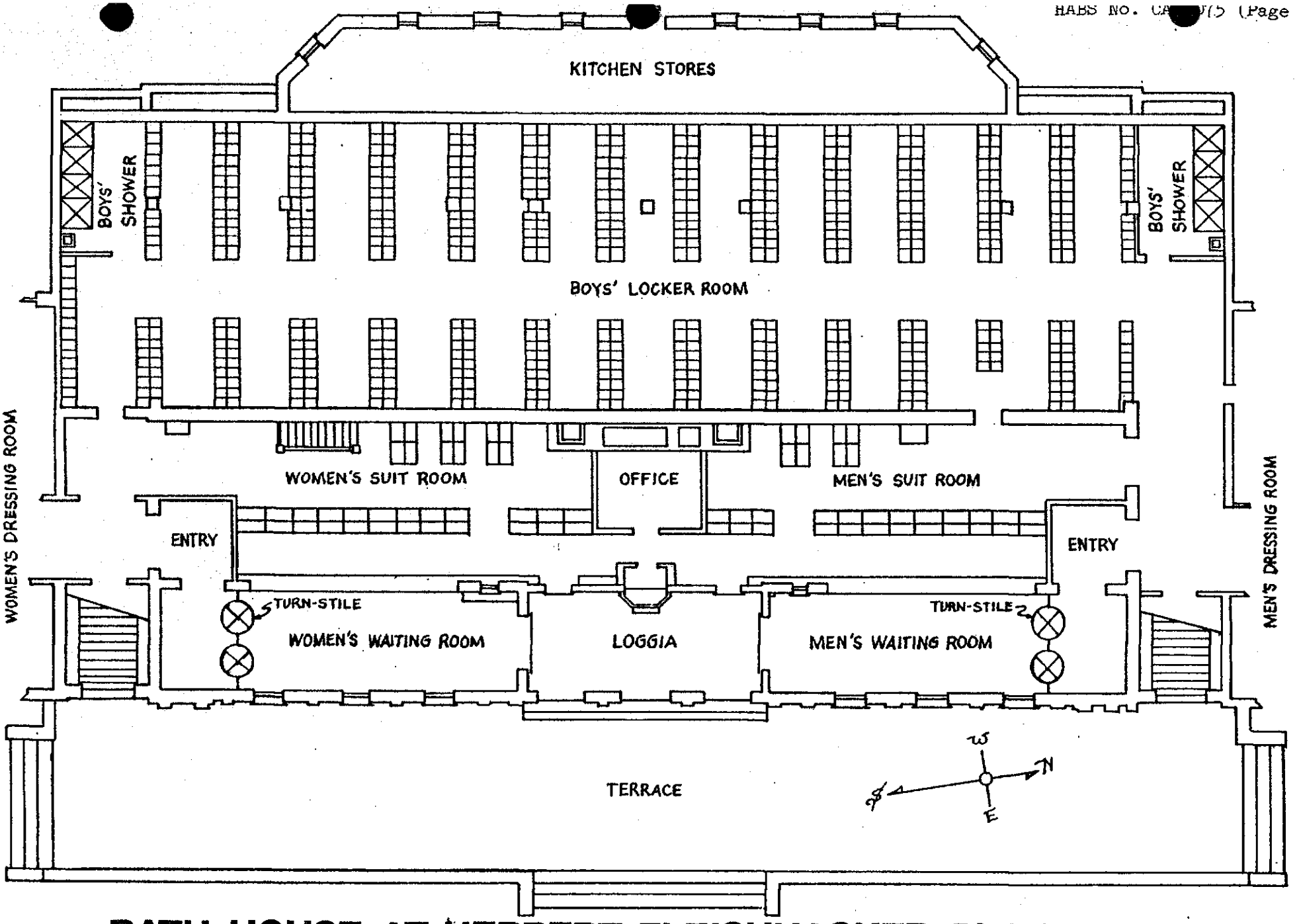
The north, men's dressing room contained: Two rows, spaced eight feet apart, of 11 columns of lockers; a restroom in the northwest corner; a restroom, exit and showers in the northwest corner; and a room for male workers, lifeguard station, exit and restrooms in the southeast corner.

Existing Uses: The interior of the bathhouse has been remodeled and its use changed, but it remains structurally unaltered. On the second floor of the central block, the cafeteria was divided into three rooms- two small and one large (approximately 95' x 24') with a stage at the northern end. Also, the upper dining room was divided into one large room (approximately 44' x 24') and four smaller rooms.

On the first floor, the boy's locker room contained a large portable indoor swimming pool formerly used by the Recreational Center for the Handicapped. The western half of the women's dressing room was divided into five rooms.

Concession Stands: Two concession Stands are located on the pool property, one near each pedestrian underpass at the north and south ends of the pool. The stands are of identical design, except for the truncated rear of the south stand. The stands have green tiled hip roofs over light stucco walls pierced by large windows with counters. They are of wood frame construction and appear to date from the time of the construction of the pool and bath house.

Boiler House: The boiler house, located northeast of the pool, houses the circulation, heating and chlorinating equipment for the pool. The boiler house itself is a functional building designed to blend in appearance with the bath house and other nearby pool and zoo buildings. It is a flat roofed structure attached to the convenience station which is on zoo property. The boiler house is a rectangular structure with a flat roof, light stucco walls, a simple cornice molding, and tiled coping. It is constructed of reinforced concrete.



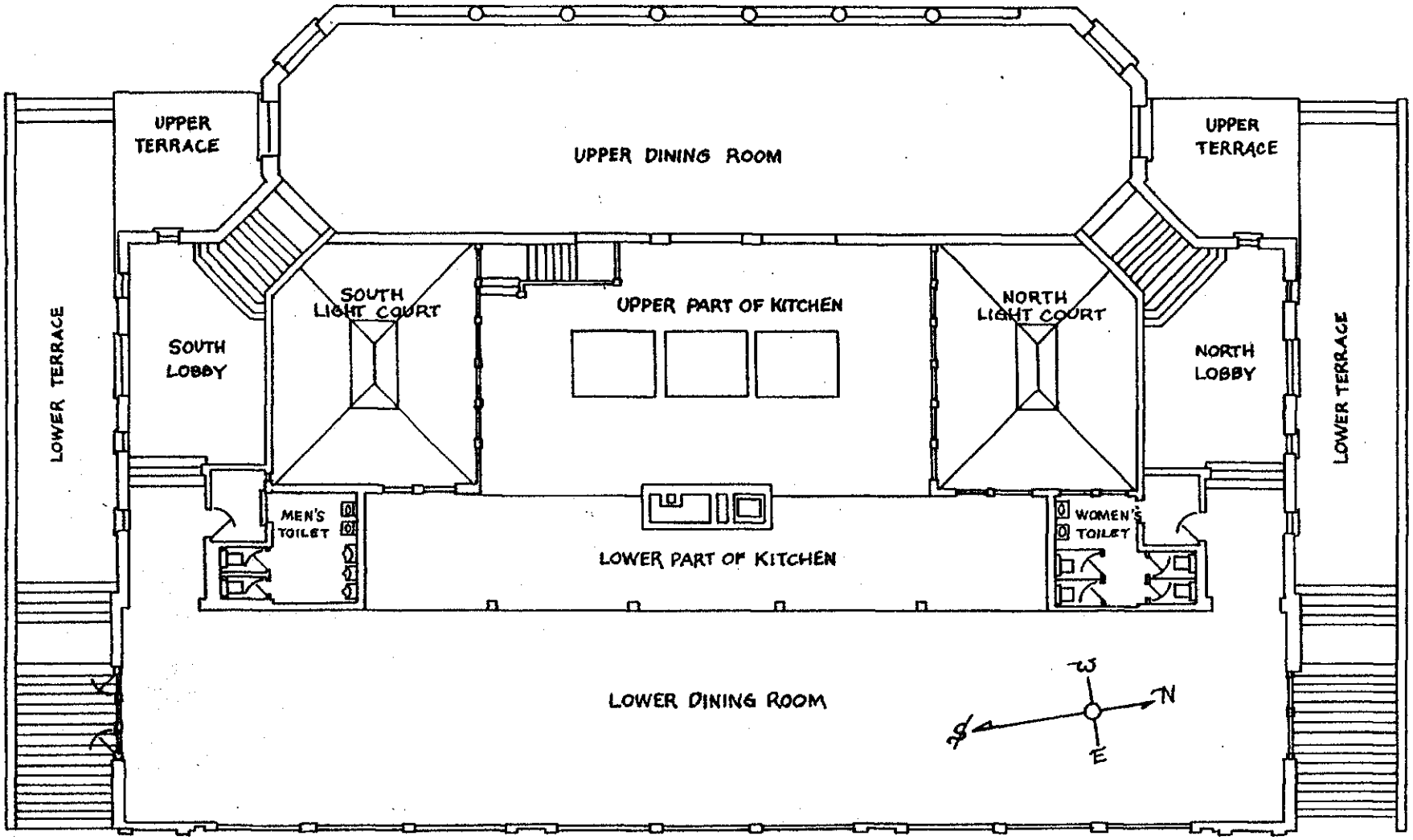
BATH HOUSE AT HERBERT FLEISHHACKER PLAYFIELD

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

(FROM DRAWINGS DATED 6-22-23 BY WARD & BLOHME, ARCHITECTS)

0 25 50

Scale in feet



BATH HOUSE AT HERBERT FLEISHHACKER PLAYFIELD

REVISED SECOND FLOOR PLAN

(FROM DRAWINGS DATED 6-22-23 BY WARD & BLOHME, ARCHITECTS)

Scale in feet

0 25 50

HISTORY

The world's largest swimming pool of its time opened in San Francisco in 192S. Fleishhacker Pool, located at Sloat Boulevard and the Great Highway, may still hold its superlative title at a length of 1000 feet, width of 150 feet at the midsection, a depth of 3 to 14 feet, and a capacity of 6,000,000 gallons of salt water. It was named in recognition of the 1920's President of the Park Commission of San Francisco whose many donations to the recreational facilities of the city included the development of the pool and adjoining Herbert Fleishhacker Playfield.

City Park System

With the notable exception of Golden Gate Park, the development of public parks and recreational facilities in San Francisco did not begin in earnest until after the turn of the century, and saw its greatest period of growth in the 1920's and 1930's. The lack of public facilities before that time was partly taken up by private amusement parks such as Woodward's gardens, but there had also been less demand for such facilities before when the general public did not have so much leisure time, when the more physical nature of work left people too tired for additional exercise, and when the accessibility of undeveloped open space made publicly opened parks unnecessary. By the 1920's, a more developed park system was long overdue, however, and in the twenty years to 1940, Aquatic Park, Marina Green, the Fleishhacker Pool, Playfield and Zoo, Stern Grove, Phelan Beach, the Palace of the Legion of Honor, Kezar Stadium, Harding Golf Course, Mt. Olympus and Mt. Davidson were all acquired by the City. In addition, the St. Francis Yacht Club and Playland at the Beach opened under private initiative.

This development reflected a changing perception of the role of city government which was now seen as obligated to involve itself in the lives of its citizens in an active way. And it reflected new patterns of recreational activity in which the family unit typically went on full-day outings.

Together with existing public and private facilities and natural features, there developed in this period a continuous recreation zone along the western rim of the city. Lincoln Park, Sutro Baths, the Cliff House, Playland, Golden Gate Park, Fleishhacker Playfield, Pool (and later Zoo), and Balboa Park were all linked together by the beach. Excellent public transportation carried vast numbers of people to these facilities.

The July 16, 192S, issue of the Municipal Record, dedicated to recreation, stated: "Today San Francisco is spending millions of dollars to conjure away exhibitions of temper under the direction of the park and playground commission and Board of Education. The children are being trained in sportsmanship. The citizens have voted 10 cents on every hundred dollars of assessed valuation shall be devoted to park purposes and that 5 cents shall be used for playgrounds." The anticipated 192S yield from these allocations was $732,000 to the Park Commission (for maintenance) and $350,000 to the Playground Commission. In addition to these sums, considerable additional expenditures by the Board of Supervisors were made, specifically for the purchase of the sixty-acre Fleishhacker Playfield (this included the pool site), the cost of beach and ocean property for Aquatic Park, and the purchase of additional land for park and playground areas. The same Municipal Record attributed San Francisco's prodigious park legacy to its Spanish heritage in which a pueblo or village was entitled to approximately seven square miles of land, or for San Francisco

virtually the entire northern tip of the peninsula. This gave the City ample lands to sell for profit and others to be retained for municipal uses, including a park system.

Swimming in the mid-20's was a particularly significant form of recreation. The Municipal Record stated that 54,000 daily admissions had been counted at the two plunges open prior to the completion of Fleishhacker Pool in 1924. And swims for the partial 1925 season with Fleishhacker Pool open were triple those for the corresponding period in the previous year. Aquatic Park was in the preliminary planning stages, with a proposed cost to the City of $1 million for land alone.

Planning of the Pool

The first official mention of plans for a beach-side swimming pool appears to be found in the Park Commission minutes for the meeting on October 13, 1921. At this time Herbert Fleishhacker outlined a resolution "relative to the purchase of land belonging to Spring Valley Water Co. to be converted into a swimming pool at the foot of Sloat Boulevard and The Great Highway and a golf links in Balboa Park and land adjoining." Of the purchase cost, $15,000 was to be taken from Park funds and the balance of payment would come from other City sources. At the January 12, 1922, Park Commission meeting, Fleishhacker made assurances that if the Board of Supervisors furnished the land, "as much money (as) necessary for the contemplated improvements will come out of the regular park appropriation. . ." and that plans for the pool were tentative to date.

Soon, however, the scheme moved toward action. On October 5, 1922, McLaren was authorized (by the Park Commission) to enter into a contract for excavation at the pool site and to prepare plans and specifications for the concrete construction work for the enormous task. In November, McLaren presented these plans drawn by Earl Clements, Engineer, and issuing from the Office of the Board of Park Commissioners. The last month of 1922 saw the Commissioners taking the next step toward realization of the project. A letter of December 16, 1922, was sent to Mr. Clarence Ward, Architect (at 454 California Street) asking if he would prepare preliminary plans for the playground buildings and bath house envisioned as part of the initial 37-acre development of the 60-acre parcel purchased from the Spring Valley Water Company. The letter explained that Ward would receive no fee for his preliminary design owing to the public nature of the structure, but that the Commissioners would do everything in their power, if the scheme were approved by the Board of Supervisors, to see that Ward would be retained as the architect for the comprehensive plans for the building and receive his share of the budget in professional fees. The letter stated that Willis Polk and Bakewell & Brown had made similar agreements for the design of the Beach Chalet and Aquatic Park, respectively.

By spring of 1923, McLaren had been authorized to lease equipment and purchase materials for the construction of the pool. The monumental project was underway. As final impetus, at the same time, Mayor Rolph appeared before the Park Commission with a resolution to dedicate the project in the name of "Herbert Fleishhacker Playfield" for this and many other projects that the President had made possible through his generous donations to the Park system. Although not mentioned by Rolph at this time, later thanks also went to the

generosity of brother Mortimer Fleishhacker for both the pool and playfield. The two brothers had featured in the playfield plans the "Mothers House" dedicated to their own mother, Delia, to accommodate women bringing their children here to play. This building was their donation to the recreation area.

Construction

Through 1923 and 1924, presumably, the construction of the world's largest pool flowed fairly smoothly. The Park Commission selected light buff walls and a green tile roof for the bath house in May, 1924, the same color scheme which the building exhibits today. In December, 1924, an ordinance addition made it illegal to remove towels, suits and other city bathing paraphenalia from municipal pools, and a resolution was passed to establish an emergency hospital facility at the new bath house.

Before the pool opened, in early 1925, the Park Commission had dealt with construction of the pool promenade, diving tower, plans for the boiler room (also by Ward and Blohme) and heating system. The pool was generously landscaped to shelter it from ocean winds, and light standards encircled the promenade. The giant plunge was filled with salt water, supposedly heated to an even 70°. The intake/outfall pipe ran under the Great Highway to a distance of 200 feet. The circulation and chlorinating systems were designed to keep the pool water flowing and to allow fresh sea water in to make up for surface evaporation.

The bath house facilities were equal to the pool accommodations in scale and service. There was dressing space for 500 to 800 in the mid-level men's and women's bathing pavilions. For the 25¢ admission per adult and 15¢ per child, each bather was to receive two towels, a suit, and locker space. Between rentals, the laundry was sterilized in two enormous washers and two more huge dryers on the basement level below the dressing rooms. The top floor of the structure housed a cafeteria-style restaurant with beach and pool views on either side of the building. (Clarence Ward's architectural partner, Harry Blohme, who had joined him after Ward's initial contract with the Park Commission, had convinced the Commissioners to add the restaurant facility to the plans in December, 1923.)

Figures and other specific facts connected with Fleishhacker Pool are, when available at all, conflicting. However, most of the following information has been gleaned from Park Department records.

The 60-acre land purchase from the Spring Valley Water Company, for the pool and playfield, cost the City $4,000 per acre, or $240,000, payable over a ten-year period. The pool was constructed at a cost of $1,035,000 including the pool itself and the bath house facilities, and most of the construction was completed in 1924. The boiler room was built in 1925, under separate contract. (The Mothers' House in the playfield cost approximately $50,000 and was donated by the Fleishhacker brothers.)

Opening

The pool was finally put into service on April 23, 1925, as San Francisco hosted the American Amateur Union (AAU) men's championships, or as the San

Francisco Examiner put it, ". . . America's greatest swimming meet . . . in the world's largest tank." For this and subsequent swim meets, the deep end of the mammoth tank was walled off to the proper length with a moveable float arrangement. Thousands overflowed the stands to see the 1925 opening events and watch as Johnny Weissmuller (known then as "the Human Fish", not Tarzan) won the four-day competition for his team, the Illinois Athletic Club, with a new world's record in the 100-yard free style race.

On May 1, 1925, the general public swarmed to opening day and waited in four massive lines for admission to the pool facility at 9:00 A.M. In addition to everything one could hope for in swimming and observation accommodations, there were patches of gleaming sand for sun worshipping on the eastern side of the pool area. The day ran onto 5:30 P.M. with 5,000 admissions, twelve lifeguards and no mishaps.

Operation

During each pool season, the operation was closed an average of four or five days every six weeks for cleaning, with variations imposed by tidal conditions. At these times the pool was emptied directly into the ocean through the original 200 ft. and later 400 ft. intake/outfall pipe. The sump which existed at the deep end gathering sand and mud below the level of the intake/outfall pipe (which was submerged to a depth of about ten feet), was drained with a portable sand pump which emptied onto the beach, and a squadron of workers hosed and brushed the pool bottom clean. The refilling operation, according to Park and Recreation Department stationary engineers, took 20 hours, ideally, and more often up to 24 hours, over a four to five day period, at the times of the highest tides, day and night. Incoming water was pumped into the pool and then circulated through the boiler room for heating and purification with chlorine gas (60 - 80 pounds per day) and bluestone (copper sulfate). Aside from being dependent on tidal schedules, the engineers had other special problems in managing the huge pool, even in times when the equipment functioned properly. The salt water would turn black and murky if heated above 70° Fahrenheit. The 24-hour continuous circulation system was located only along the eastern wall of the pool. The tank had no filtration system. But in spite of all its eccentricities, and, later, problems attributable to age, the pool enjoyed full seasons through 1970.

Use

For many years, Fleishhacker Pool continued to operate for swimmers and special swimming events. Admissions for the first sixty days counted 41,065 adults and 15,688 children for an average of 950 persons each day. The routine established for succeeding years recorded 9:00 to 5:00 hours from approximately April to November in early years, and September 30th in later ones. (Some early publicity boasts night-time swims and a year-round season.)

There were from 12 to 25 lifeguards at Fleishhacker Pool, as recorded during various seasons. Some patrolled in rowboats. In the first forty seasons, 1925 to 1965, it was estimated that 8,500,000 people swam in the plunge. Admissions were originally 25¢ for adults and 15¢ for children. After World War II, the rates went up for adults and down for students. In 1952, all rates were reduced and admissions soared. For June 15 to 30, 1952, attendance was 10,641 and receipts $1,795.45, as compared to 5,690 persons and $1,219.20

for the entire month of June, 1951. The July comparisons were also striking: July 1 to 12, 1952 - 7,372 people, $1,185.05; July 1 to 12, 1951 - 3,530 people, $813.10.

Decline in Use

By 1964, pool attendance had gone into permanent decline. Pool operating costs were approximately $60,500 and revenue was just over $7,000 for a seasonal deficit of $53,500. Although these figures are more dramatic than earlier ones, a 1943 news clipping notes a deficit at that time of over $18,000. In 1970, Fleishhacker Pool's operation cost the City an estimated $2.60 per swimmer as compared to $1.42 at the indoor pools. In its last full season, 1970, total attendance was recorded at 56,605, down in the daily average to 309 as opposed to 615 in 1969. (The total 1970 attendance, for a four-and-one-half month season, was cited as being below one month's attendance at the zoo.)

Most of the 1964 operating costs, $46,271.15, were attributable to wages and salaries. The cleaning and refilling system had always been a major job and age had made the pool's operation even more temperamental. The final blow came with the partial collapse or disintegration of the intake/outfall pipe before the scheduled opening of the 1971 season. (The pipe had been extended 200 feet in 1954 at a cost of approximately $1,000 per foot.) Resourceful engineering made one last attempt to fill the pool with fresh water from wells adjacent to the boiler house. The operation took a month and the standing pool water began to turn impure during this time. The pool opened for one last month. Then the engineers tossed a 6" disk in eight feet of water in accordance with the aquatic department's standards for lifeguard visibility. The disc vanished. With agreement from the Health Department (the water failed to meet State standards as well), the pool was closed and drained. It remains empty at the present time except for very murky water at the "sump" level of the deep end.

Reasons for the decline in use are varied. Generally speaking, the pool belongs to a class of recreation which has suffered as past patterns of family recreation have changed and as the automobile has made different kinds of recreation possible. When Fleishhacker Pool opened, its principal competition was from Sutro Baths and the beaches. By the time it closed, there were a great many more pools in the city, both publicly and privately owned. Whereas a family might have spent the day going to Fleishhacker Pool, now children can go by themselves to a neighborhood pool. With greatly increased use of automobiles since World War II, a day-long outing has so many more possibilities than in the past when the streetcar line to the western edge of the city was all most people could consider.

Not the least of the Pool's problems was its cold and often foggy weather. Many of the new neighborhood pools are indoors and most are in sunnier sections of the city.

Past Revitalization Plans

The pool had remained very popular up until its closing for military use after the start of World War II. Attendance problems did not begin until after it reopened in 1943. At this time, preliminary plans were drawn to put a palm-treed island of sand at the mid-section of the pool and divide the large tank into two smaller ones. In 1946 there were plans for conversion to an ice rink.

In 1948, plans included the design of an aluminum cover for the entire pool.

Real changes occurred in the 40's also. By 1948 a fence was built to protect the pool from increasing vandalism problems (the light standards were removed at this time), and the present diving platform, a replacement for the original wood structure which had suffered from the harsh ocean-side climate and was not of correct measurements to meet present swim competition standards, was another 40's "improvement".

Changes to the bath house facility were also made to accommodate changes in the use of the pool. In 1952 the top portion of the structure became the Center for the Handicapped. They occupied it into 1973, and even had an indoor pool added to the facility. The building is still in use for a children's craft camp and a pottery studio.

The Present

Although the bath house is serving some functions at present, the future use of the pool and its structures is uncertain. The San Francisco Zoo and Waste Water Management both have plans for the site which will require the elimination of present facilities. The official word of the Park and Recreation Department is conveyed in "Resolution No. 10647" of February 10, 1977. The resolution states that: the weather in the area is not conducive to outdoor swimming; the costs of restoration, maintenance and operation are prohibitive; other municipal pools meet City needs; the land occupied by Fleishhacker Pool is not required for swimming, and ". . . appropriate steps should be taken to return the land to better recreational use."

The Patron: Herbert Fleishhacker

Herbert Fleishhacker was born on November 2, 1972, of German and American descent, in San Francisco. His parents, Delia (Stern) and Aaron, had one other child, Mortimer, who was six years older than Herbert. After eight years of public grammar school and one year of study at Heald's Business College, Herbert, at the age of 14, joined his father's business. His years in the paper business with A. Fleishhacker & Company included positions as bookkeeper, manager of manufacturing operations, and as a very successful traveling salesman. When he left to form his own company, he established the first papermill in the northwest, in Eugene, Oregon. When he returned to California he organized power companies and manufacturing plants until his ventures numbered over a dozen different businesses.

In 1905 he married May Belle Greenebaum, and in 1907 he entered banking as manager of the London, Paris & American Bank. Ltd. Sigmund Greenebaum, his father-in-law, was the bank's president. Successful in banking, Herbert directed a merger in 1909 which created the Anglo & London Paris National Bank. Herbert Fleishhacker became the president of this bank in 1910. In 1914 the Anglo-California Trust Company was incorporated with Mortimer as president and Herbert as vice president.

By 1927, Herbert was president of the San Francisco bank with the largest foreign exchange business. It was one of California's largest banking institutions and had overseas operations in commercial centers in both Europe and Asia. At this time his business interests extended to over twenty other companies including steel, sugar, timber, life insurance, food, tractor, shipping and oil operations. He acted as an officer of many of these enterprises. In the

1927 publication, Financing an Empire, History of Banking in California, volume 3, it was said that ". . . representing millions of dollars and with operations extending to all parts of the world, Herbert Fleishhacker has become widely recognized as one of the most influential, progressive and valuable citizens of the Golden state."

His city home in the 20's was the St. Francis Hotel. His children were Mrs. Marjorie Fleishhacker Mitau, Herbert, Jr., and Alan. He was appointed to the Park Commission (1919; president, 1920) and to the Sesquicentennial Exposition Association (by President Coolidge in 1926).

Architects

Fleishhacker Pool itself was designed by Earl Clements, an engineer in the Office of the Board of Park Commissioners.

The major pool building, the bath house, was designed by the prominent San Francisco architectural firm of Ward and Blohme. Clarence R. Ward was initially contacted by the Park Commissioners, but by the time design work began, he had formed a partnership with J. Harry Blohme. Ward, the elder member of the firm, had been a prominent architect in San Francisco for many years. He was best known, along with his former partner Henry H. Meyers, as having played a major role in the rebuilding of the city after the earthquake and fire of 1906.

Ward was born in Niles, Michigan, in 1870, and moved with his family to the Bay Area as a child. He began his architectural apprenticeship in Oakland at the age of 15 while he attended California Military Academy. At 20 he took a job in Atlanta, Georgia, first with Bruce & Morgan, and later with Henry W. Norman. He returned to San Francisco to the office of Frank Shea, and later Edward R. Swain whom he succeeded in 1892. Ward practiced independently until 1904 when he joined in the partnership of Meyers and Ward (1904 to 1924).

Meyers and Ward's best buildings were the Alaska Commercial Building (demolished), the Methodist Book Concern, and the Aronson Building. In addition, they rebuilt the Wells Fargo Building at Second and Mission and the Kohl Building after the fire, and built sixty to one hundred (estimates vary) new buildings during that period. Among these were the Alaska Commercial, Aronson, Samuel's Lace House Buildings, and six buildings for the Hyman Brothers estate. They also designed the Machinery Building at the Panama Pacific International Exposition.

The best known works of the firm of Ward and Blohme (1924 to 1935) are the Children's Hospital in San Francisco, and the rebuilding of the Stanford Memorial Chapel.

Ward was at various times a member of the State Board of Architecture and an editor of the important regional architectural journal, the Architect and Engineer. He was a member of the Bohemian Club, Olympic Club, Family Club, and the Merchants Exchange.

SUMMARY OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE POOL AND ITS BUILDINGS

Fleishhacker Pool was, at the time it was built, the largest swimming pool in the world. It contained a uniquely designed circulation and heating system that kept 6,000,000 gallons of salt water heated, and which utilized the tides of the ocean to fill the pool.

The pool was an important part of the grand scheme of expansion and improvement of the city park system during the 1920's and 1930's, when there was a continuous recreation zone along the western edge of the city. From its opening in 1925 until it finally closed in 1971, it was open to the public every summer (except for a short period during World War II), for daily swimming as well as special events such as swimming competitions. The pool played a significant role in the recreational and cultural life of the city, particularly in the years before World War II.

The pool was named after Herbert Fleishhacker, a wealthy banker and great civic patron of recreation in San Francisco. Fleishhacker was President of the Board of the Park Commission and was a motivating force behind the idea of the pool.

The major pool building, the bath house, is a good example of its style and time. It was designed by the important San Francisco architectural firm of Ward and Blohme in 1925, in the Mediterranean style. The front facade is a knowledgeably detailed composition of an Ionic order with a three-part central entranceway crowned by appropriately aquatic creatures and ornaments. The fenestration of the second floor on both pool side and ocean side consists of large squares of industrial sash which create well-lit spaces formerly used as restaurant dining areas. Wells in the center of the building flood a large ground floor space with light through skylights. The flanking wings of the main central block of the bath house are less interesting.

Altogether, the Fleishhacker Pool and its buildings constitute a unique public facility which has outlived its original usefulness. Of the group, the central block of the bath house, as a good example of the architecture of its time, remains interesting today on aesthetic grounds. The significance of the rest, which is primarily in its cultural value to the city, and in its unique engineering (which is both deteriorated and obsolete) is largely in the past.

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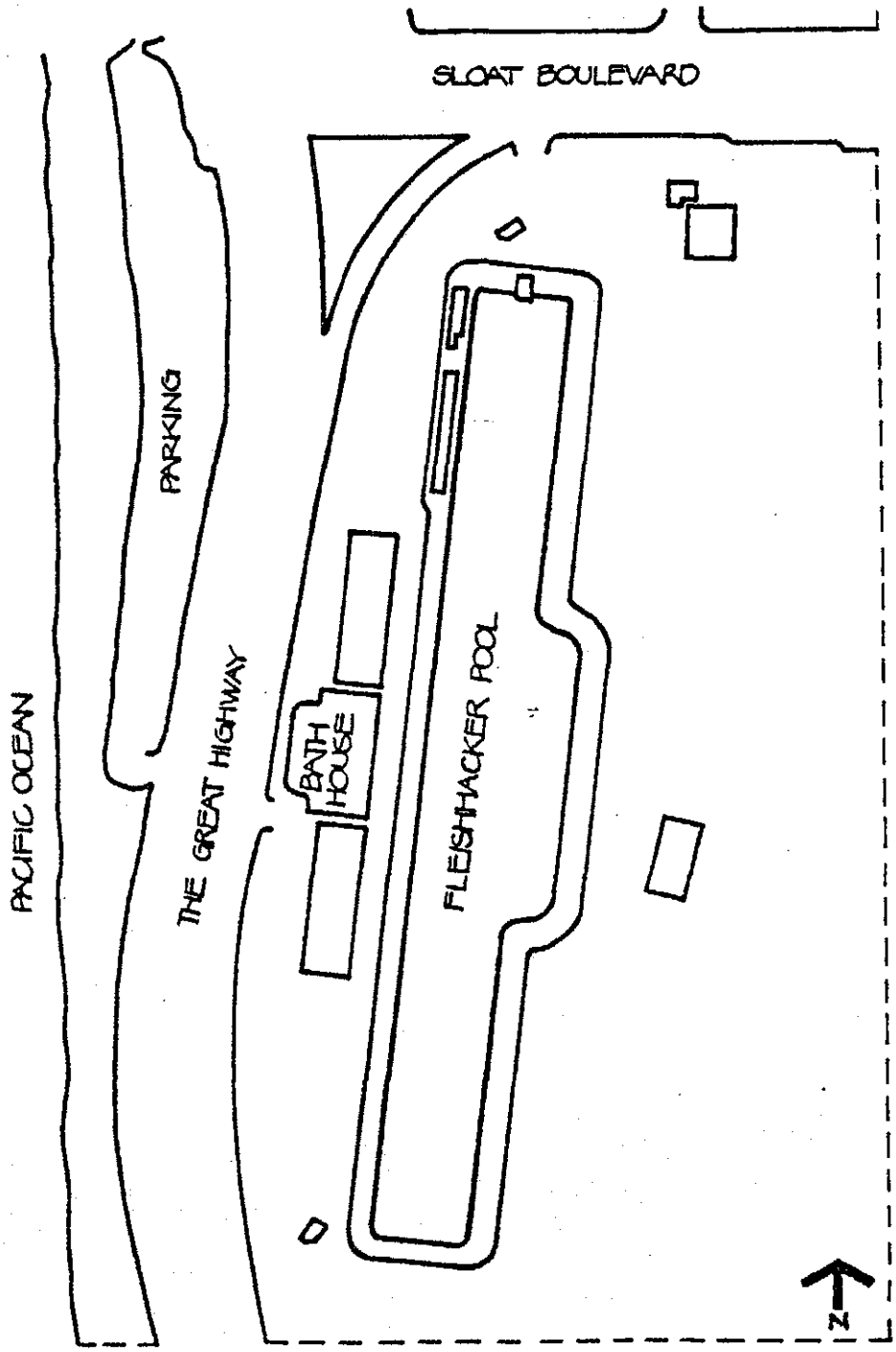
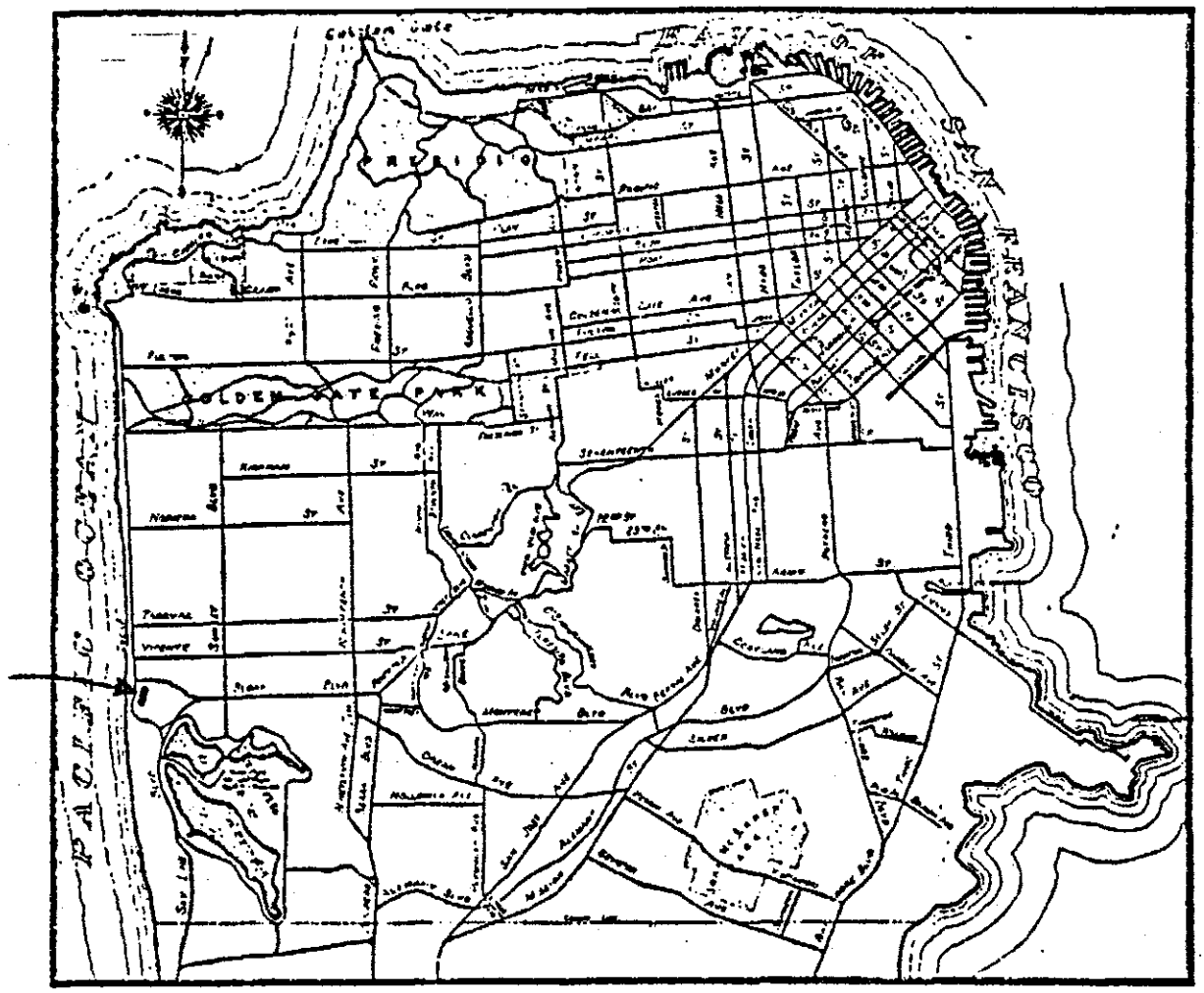
Project Information: This project was undertaken by the Environmental Protection Agency in compliance with Executive Order 11593 and a Memorandum of Agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as a mitigative effort in the construction of the San Francisco Westside Transport project. John A. Burns, AIA was the HABS project coordinator. Photographs were taken in July 1979 by Craig Buchanan. The written data was compiled by Charles Hall Page & Associates, Inc. for the San Francisco Zoological Society in August 1977. It was prepared for transmittal to the Library of Congress by Patricia L. Rowse in July 1980.

FLEISHHACKER POOL FACILITIES



LOCATION OF FLEISHHACKER MUNICIPAL POOL

Fleishhacker Pool is located in the southwestern part of the City and County of San Francisco, at the southeast corner of Sloat Boulevard and the Great Highway. Across the Great Highway are Ocean Beach and the Pacific Ocean. The Fleishhacker Pool is bordered on the east by the existing City Zoo, formally named the San Francisco Zoological Gardens and also known as the Fleishhacker Zoo.



Map prepared by:
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